

Wortley, near Leeds, Oct 24, 1850.

GARRISON
MSS.

My Dear Friend,

I am glad to learn from The Liberator that you are well, and able to labour in the cause of freedom. I hope you will live to see the great object of your wishes and the great end of your labours accomplished. I feel exceedingly desirous to see the spirit of liberty & righteousness triumph over the spirit of oppression and wrong. Nothing on earth would rejoice me more than the abolition of American slavery.

It is, so far as I can learn, the most heinous form of iniquity, the most revolting piece of inhumanity with which the earth is at present dishonoured and cursed.

This, besides, one of the strongest props of European Tyranny, and one of the greatest obstacles to the spread and triumph of European liberty. No men on earth are engaged in a more important enterprise than you and your fellow-labourers. Most devoutly do I pray for your success, and most gladly would I aid you in your arduous and god-like labours.

I have often resolved to write to you; but as I never found time to write a long letter, I have never kept my resolution. But I can put off writing no longer. I must express my joy in your labours, and my wishes for your success.

I have felt most keenly since the passing of the new law for the capture of fugitive slaves. Common as it is for governments to sin, and extravagant and outrageous as their transgressions frequently are, I recollect no instance of any government that has so grievously harrowed my feelings as this most infamous and inhuman

enactment. Is it possible that the people of the Northern States will allow it to be put in force? Is it possible that they will allow it to remain on the statute book? Can they be so indifferent to their reputation, - can they be so insensible to duty, - can they be so regardless of the interests of their fellow men as to allow the Southern Kidnappers to come amongst them, take away their neighbours, and perhaps themselves at pleasure, and carry them away to be sold in the Southern markets? If the law be not speedily abolished, America will become a proverb for inconsistency and inhumanity throughout the whole of the civilized world. If the law be not speedily abolished, there is hardly a man in Europe that will not look on America with disgust & loathing. No one in England, perhaps, has spoken more favourably of the free States of America than myself; but if they allow this law for the capture of fugitive slaves to be executed, I shall have to retract every word I have spoken, and mournfully acknowledge that America is the basest and most inhuman of all the nations upon earth. I have lately been in Ireland, and I saw such forms of misery there as pained me most acutely. The indignation I felt against the Tyrants who had created such fearful scenes of misery was greater than I can describe. I felt as if I could have found in my heart, if I had had the power, to bear them in pieces and destroy them from the face of the earth. But on reading in The Standard the account of the capture and carrying away of James Hamlet, I felt, if possible, more keenly still. I felt that there were human beings in a worse condition than even the plundered and starving Irish. I saw no Irishman that was not at liberty to run away from his wretched

country and seek a living and a home elsewhere. I saw
no such landlords with whips and bowie knives, with pistols
and rifles, with bloodhounds and kidnappers, hunting the runaway
paupers in order to bring them back to their wretchedness and
rags. I could not help but feel, while reading the papers which
I have last received from your country, that notwithstanding
the excellency of its laws and institutions in many respects,
and the comparative happiness of the middle and labouring classes
in the free states, the country is disgraced and afflicted
with a curse more terrible than the most miserable and
down-trodden country I have seen in monarchical Europe.

The passing of the Fugitive Slave Bill has produced a most
discouraging effect on the minds of my wife and children, as
well as on my own. We were looking forward to America
as our future home. We had made up our minds to leave
England for one of your western states in March or April next,
with the intention of settling there. The news which we have
received by the last post has obliged us, most reluctantly,
to suspend or modify our resolution. We shall never be able to
make America our home, if the law remains in force. We
shall probably come to your country, and spend some time
in it; but if the northern people do not render the iniquitous
law inoperative, and insist on its speedy abolition, we shall,
if permitted, return to England, and end our days under its
monarchical and aristocratical institutions. If the northern states
allow the law to remain on the statute-book and to be put in
force, we shall come to the conclusion, that however you
may excel us in many of your laws, and in some of your
political and social institutions, the people of England are
a more enlightened, a more virtuous, a more manly, a
more god-like, a more respectable and worthy set of people
than the inhabitants even of the northern states of America.

But I cannot believe as yet that the northern states will
allow the law to be put in force, or even to remain on the
statute-book. It will be one of the greatest disappointments and
one of the bitterest mortifications and humiliations of my life,
if they do not act in such a way as to render the law

of non effect and secure its speedy abolition.

I wish I could spend a few years in labouring with you in the cause of abolition. I must continue to assist you in your labours in some way. There are many of my readers who would like to help you, if they only knew how to do it. We must endeavour to find out some means of giving you assistance, and of hastening the downfall of that revolting and inhuman system that so fearfully dishonours and curses your country.

With kindest regards to all your fellow-labourers, and with most earnest prayers for your success & triumph in the cause of human freedom,

I am,

Yours very affectionately,

W. L. Garrison Esq.

Joseph Barker

(This)

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